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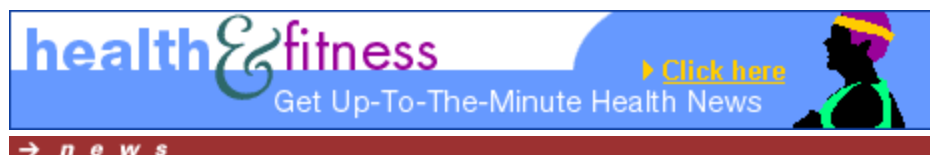
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**NEWS** with THE BAY CITY TIMES

## site disposal merit support

Monday, May 7, 2001

River dredging,

Look around town and you can't help but see how we all use products shipped by water into the Saginaw River. The companies that handle these products have come together as the Upper Saginaw River Alliance to push for a multimillion-dollar river dredging project to get their products into and out of the river efficiently.

The upper Saginaw River dredging proposal affects the people of Bay and Saginaw counties and those living in a 150-mile radius of these companies.

The businesses that make up the alliance are urging governments to dredge the Saginaw River shipping channel between the Zilwaukee Bridge in Saginaw County and Bay City's Liberty Bridge. The shallowed channel has put them in a tough spot. And water levels are down in the Great Lakes and their tributaries.

The ships that bring in stone, cement, road salt and agricultural fertilizer and take products must load less cargo during each trip up and down the river. But smaller loads drive up prices.

These longtime companies have a pressing and legitimate need. Their plea deserves the support of local governments. They pay taxes, contribute to the regional economy, and are a direct source of hundreds of jobs.

The cause is a public one because the products that

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arrive by ship are used to build sidewalks, roads, houses and commercial buildings. The fertilizers coming to Saginaw Valley farmers boost crop yields and help determine the price of the beans and beet sugar we see on pantry shelves. The crops going out are a source of national and international trade.

The alliance predicts that shipping will have to end if the channel goes many more years without being cleared. Many of its companies will face finding new sites or shutting down. As Bay City well knows, moving just one company a short distance has an \$18 million price in loans and grants. Multiply that by a dozen for other businesses and the cost goes out of sight. That's assuming there's suitable land available elsewhere on the Saginaw River, an uncertain proposition.

The call for dredging has been ongoing for about three years, but the big stumbling block has been what to do with the silt. It is contaminated and can't be dumped out in the open along the river or in the bay.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has suggested three sites, two in Saginaw County and one in Frankenlust Township in Bay County. Each site has about 400 acres, though the current dredging plan would fill only about 100 to 150 acres. A site of some 400 acres would provide needed disposal space for future dredge projects. The only current disposal facility will be filled soon.

The alliance prefers a smaller temporary site. It also suggests that spoils could be recycled for other uses like roadbed or airport runway materials. The alliance has a good point, if the spoils can be reused and not have to be confined forever, filling yet another spoils site.

The sediment is only lightly contaminated. The mud taken from it won't be a glowing mass in the night, according to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The disposal site will be subject to strict rules and monitored for health and environmental safety.

Residents and their township governments need to learn the details and support the dredging and disposal site - not only for the health of the companies, but for the good of the entire Saginaw

River and Valley community.

- Our View is the editorial opinion of The Bay City Times, as determined by the newspaper's editorial board, which includes the editorial page editor, the editor and the publisher.

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